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Improving the National Strategy Process

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

Improving the National Strategy Process

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Abstract

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The existing United States national strategy process is in dire need of improvement. A national strategy which is not directed at achieving specific national objectives or which is not resourced to do so lacks utility. The current strategic direction processes fail to provide the desired ends with the ways and means to achieve them. The current system needs to be improved through legislation and Presidential Directive. This paper will analyze those issues which can be modified and improved within the current system. This includes nesting of department strategies and ways to ensure that all elements of the DIME work cooperatively to achieve national interests, that these strategies are adequately resourced and organized through the budgeting process in conjunction with Congress, and provides for periodic intelligence and progress reviews in order to make course corrections or adjustments.

Improving the National Strategy Process

> While the world is changing, and as its interactions pick up speed thanks to the spreading implications of the information revolution, most of the component parts of the U.S. national security system, still organized hierarchically around traditional organizational disciplines, grow more ponderous and reactive.
>
> —James Locher[1]

The existing United States national strategy process is in dire need of improvement. A national strategy which is not directed at achieving specific national objectives or which is not resourced to do so lacks utility. The current strategic direction processes fail to provide the desired ends with the ways and means to achieve them.[2] Identifying national ends and resources will still fail to provide satisfactory results if they are not properly planned, coordinated, and executed by the interagency process. The current system needs to be improved through legislation and Presidential Directive. These improvements will ensure that all elements of the DIME work cooperatively to achieve national interests, that they are adequately resourced and organized to do so through the budgeting process, and will provide for periodic progress reviews in order to make course corrections or adjustments.

The Current Situation and Critique

"The National Security Act of 1947, subsequent amendments, the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986, Congressional rules, and a host of Presidential, Department and Agency directives created the current national security organizations and structures."[3] With America increasingly involved in global affairs following World War II, the role of the various executive departments and their relationship to one another became more and more entangled. As Karl Inderfuth and Loch Johnson noted, "Problems of

assimilation clearly have multiplied as governments pursue more and more complex, frequently conflicting objectives."[4] The multiple committees and advisory groups formed during the war were first brought into a formalized plan for civil-military coordination in the National Security Act of 1947, which established the National Security Council (NSC), provided a secretary of defense, and linked the three services with joint committees under the service chiefs. In 1949 the system was amended to consolidate authority under the secretary of defense and provide a chairman for the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

In 1986 the Department of Defense Reorganization Act (known as the Goldwater-Nichols Act) addressed several key features intended to promote joint cooperation among the services. The act also mandated the production of strategy documents that were to be used by the executive and legislative branches. James Miskel recognized that, "The national security strategy statements . . . were to identify national interests and the strategies being pursued to achieve them, and that both classified and unclassified reports were to be published."[5] According to the Congressional Research Service, "The core national security strategic documents today are the national security strategy, the national defense strategy together with the Quadrennial Defense Review report, and the national military strategy."[6] In addition to these mandated documents there exists a host of other "strategies" produced by various agencies and addressing topics as diverse as money laundering, strategic communication, and pandemic influenza.

The Goldwater-Nichols Act systematically changed the roles and authorities of the existing military institutions, while developing incentives and disincentives to alter

how the military acts and operates, in addition to tying the military instrument of power to an articulated and agreed upon strategy. Consequently, many of those espousing changes to our current national strategy process have turned to the Goldwater-Nichols Act as a blueprint for what right looks like.

Michele Flournoy is one of those calling for change. Writing with various groups and authors such as Shawn Brimley, Flournoy has identified several issues which call for action.[7] Flournoy believes that the current strategy planning process focuses on issues already on the policy agenda, rather than future challenges. Nor does our current process address the types of capabilities needed in the future. All of this is exacerbated by a budgeting process which is not tied to strategic ends. Flournoy argues for an inclusive and integrated process for long term strategic planning in the executive branch modeled after President Eisenhower's Solarium Project.[8] She also advocates the creation of an NSC Senior Director, an Office for Strategic Planning, and a classified National Security Planning Guidance. She recommends improving interagency understanding and cooperation through an annual table-top exercise program for senior national security officials and joint NSC- Office of Management and Budget (OMB) mission area reviews.

James Locher is another advocate for changing our current system. Locher has been intimately involved in studying the interagency and strategy development process, including participation in several of the Beyond Goldwater-Nichols studies. He advocates new approaches focused on missions and outcomes, such as linking resources to goals through mission analysis and mission budgeting. Locher's approach emphasizes organizational restructuring.[9] This includes the establishment of a

President's Security Council to replace the NSC and Homeland Security Council (HSC) and the creation of interagency teams and interagency crisis task forces to decentralize policy implementation. All of these recommendations are designed to improve the executive-legislative relationship while focusing the executive office on strategy and strategic management.

Given the current state of affairs and the critique of our present system, there can be no doubt that our national strategy process can be improved. Realizing that the press of daily challenges prevents any attempt at wholesale change, this paper will analyze those issues which can be modified and improved within the current system. This includes nesting of department strategies and ways to ensure that all elements of the DIME work cooperatively to achieve national interests, that these strategies are adequately resourced and organized through the budgeting process in conjunction with Congress, and provides for periodic intelligence and progress reviews in order to make course corrections or adjustments.

Analysis of the Issues

Nesting

The National Security Strategy (NSS) is our current overarching strategy which guides the development of the interagency supporting strategies. These supporting strategies then guide the actions of the agencies in achieving our strategic ends. But the current NSS is a vague document with broad themes, written for public consumption, without the specificity required for positive action. Statesmen, security professionals, and academics all agree that strategy and foreign policy is best made when the national interests are clearly defined and articulated.[10] Our current process fails to properly identify long term strategic interests, assign responsibility for their

accomplishment, and coordinate between the various agencies to prevent redundancy or interagency fratricide. This does not mean direct control of the interagency efforts by the NSC or the president. As Kenneth Payne wrote, “Strategy, however, does not always require direct operational control, or centralized planning, although it certainly requires a shared framework . . .”[11] Providing a long term strategy with enduring national interests and detailed planning guidance to the subordinate agencies will provide that shared framework.

This unity of effort will ensure that all the elements of national power will be brought to bear on the complex issues that face the nation. Sunil Desai stated, “For any nation, coordinating the diverse elements of national power--diplomatic, economic, intelligence, military, and law enforcement to name a few--is inherently difficult.”[12] This difficulty results in the uncoordinated and often lop-sided allocation of tasks, such as the over reliance upon the military for stability operations and state building in the last ten years. Kathleen Hicks observed, “Senior leaders have many opportunities for visibility and decision making, but their guidance is not well orchestrated across key issue sets, including strategic development.”[13] The challenges America faces require a whole of government approach to be successful. David Rothkopf noted, “The stasis of Cold War containment is a defunct strategy now. We are part of the wide fluid world, and we need a global perspective to embrace it.”[14] Consequently our national strategy and planning guidance must incorporate all elements of the DIME. As David Abshire wrote regarding grand strategies, “They must provide an integrated conceptual framework that defines the relationship between the goals and instruments of power and among the instruments of power themselves.”[15] Only then can the different actors determine the

resources required and develop appropriate supporting strategies to support the national strategy.

But simply identifying the agency responsibilities is not enough. The tasks must then be coordinated during supporting strategy development and execution to prevent interagency fratricide and redundancy. Kathleen Hicks identified the problem that, "When multiple guidance documents produced by these competing systems conflict, customers, capability providers, and other stakeholders inside and outside the department are left to determine which are binding and which can be ignored."[16] The current system attempts to accomplish this through the interagency process, but the results are haphazard at best. Colin Gray identifies the top two problems faced by strategists as the enemy and a dysfunctional policymaking process at home.[17] American interagency cooperation currently works best during periods of crisis, when all efforts are focused on a single issue. This cooperation rapidly breaks down during the day to day management and gives way to beltway competition, often with detrimental results to our national interests. As Tami Davis Biddle pointed out, "Stove-piping of information, bureaucratic infighting, and organizational and cultural biases also can cause us to flounder on the shoals of ignorance, self-interest, or arrogance."[18]

Our current national strategy process can be improved by ensuring we prosecute whole of government solutions to our complex challenges. In order to do so, we must identify and articulate clear, well defined strategic ends, and then assign appropriate responsibilities. We must ensure that agencies develop supporting strategies, and that those strategies are deconflicted during development and execution. Paul Miller warned, ". . . The threat to effectual policy and especially, effective execution, lies at the

boundaries between agencies where cohesion is least and bureaucratic conflict greatest."[19]

Seeing the Future

Another issue with the current system is the lack of intelligence gathering and analysis at the strategic level. No nation can develop a strategy to pursue its national interests without accurate intelligence to inform decision makers on what the threats or obstacles to those interests may be. Our current intelligence community consists of 16 different agencies designed to provide integrated intelligence capabilities.[20] These agencies are tasked to provide the government with accurate analysis in a timely manner, but there continue to be problems with the implementation of that goal. The Congressional Research Service identified that, "Congressional intelligence committees have for some time noted weakness in analysis, a lack of language skills, and a predominant focus on current intelligence at the expense of strategic analysis."[21] This results in strategy that is frequently developed from estimates based upon very little information.[22]

The intelligence community must provide strategic intelligence: long range forecasts based upon rigorous analysis and incorporating diverse elements such as the global environment and the predicted actions of other actors. Richard Immerman recommends that in contrast to current intelligence, this strategic intelligence would be ". . . That composite intelligence, interdepartmental in character, which is required . . . in determining policies with respect to national planning and security in peace and war and for the advancement of broad national policy."[23] Such a shift is required to advance intelligence production beyond the tactical and operational levels into the strategic realm where it will provide meaningful input to the interagency and strategy development

processes. This input would be instrumental for the president and the NSC in the production of a grand national strategy and detailed planning guidance, as well as to the various departments as they develop their nested supporting strategies.

Once the strategy has been crafted, the focus for the intelligence community then shifts to collection on those identified national interests and the effectiveness of our implemented strategy. The conditions for this shift were created by the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004. The act established the Director of National Intelligence, a position which would facilitate strategic intelligence gathering in its capacity as the principal intelligence advisor to the president. Rather than seeking solely to provide intelligence on imminent threats and the current global situation, the Director is capable of overseeing the collection and interdepartmental dissemination of intelligence which would support strategists and policy makers in the development and assessment of strategy. As noted by Flournoy and Brimley, “While the Intelligence Community provides valuable products to policymakers on a regular basis, it has not been tasked to support a more interactive process in which future trends, possible developments, and wild cards can be discussed and debated to inform national security issues.”[24]

Attempting to develop and assess strategy without the appropriate intelligence is haphazard at best and disastrous at worst. In the absence of dedicated support by the intelligence community, strategists will rely on in-house assessments or think tank products, further stovepiping and confusing the interagency process, making coordinated effort all but impossible. Kathleen Hicks recognized this when she wrote that, “The next QDR should also be prefaced by a set of competitive, independent

analyses of the strategic environment and its implications for the U.S defense policy."[25] Occasional steps have been made in this direction, such as the National Intelligence Council's Global Trends 2025 report, but such products are intermittent and not fully integrated into the strategy development and interagency process.[26]

Show Me the Money

Our current system faces significant challenges in resourcing our national strategy. The president, the NSC, and the governmental departments can draft creative and detailed strategies to meet national objectives, but without congressional approval of the required resources those strategies are doomed to failure. Strategies without resources are simply plans. As Eliot Cohen stated, "Strategy is the art of choice that binds means with objectives."[27]

The current process is deliberately inefficient, the result of the crafted separation of powers between the executive and legislative branches of government. The executive branch identifies national interests, devises strategy, and even assigns responsibilities for the ways in which to achieve those objectives. Yet the resources, the means which enable those ways, are controlled by Congress through the budgeting process. Donald Snow and Eugene Brown noted that following World War II, "Foreign and defense policy and its implementation became an increasing part of the competition for scarce government resources."[28] This competition can have an adverse affect on strategy implementation. Paul Miller wrote, "Effective policy implementation depends on encouraging teamwork over turf wars."[29] Under the current system, the determination of whether a strategy will succeed or fail is firstly determined by the resources allocated to its execution. Consequently, resourcing is the most important execution indicator.

A whole of government approach to strategy requires a whole of government approach to budgeting. Janine Davidson states, “Currently the stovepiped committee system in Congress reinforces the agency-centric approach to budgeting and therefore operations.”[30] Agencies prepare their own budgets in relative isolation, with the only coordination conducted by the Office of Management and Budget through fiscal guidance. Consequently, as Flournoy and Brimley point out, “These budgets are keyed to . . . individual agency priorities, but not always to common strategic priorities.”[31]

Additionally, Congress is only peripherally involved in the development of national strategy and the nested interagency process. The development of strategy and policy is often jealously guarded by the president and the executive branch. Lee Hamilton observed that “. . . Presidents tend to inform Congress of their decisions after the fact rather than consulting it during policy development. They tend to treat Congress as an obstacle to overcome instead of as a partner in the policy making process.”[32] The result is a lack of congressional involvement in and support of strategy, or even Congressional shackling of the executive strategy through budgetary or legislative restraints. Snow and Brown opine, “The dominant theme of executive-legislative interaction has been the rise of congressional activism. When Congress feels it has either been excluded or that the executive branch has acted wrongly or unwisely, Congress reacts.”[33]

Although congressional budget reform is beyond the scope of this paper, it is necessary to recognize this critical component of the ends-ways-means equation of strategy. Even without significant reform, it is necessary for the executive branch to establish a closer working relationship with Congress in the strategy and interagency

process. In developing and assessing strategy, we need to include operational and strategic performance, the efficient and effective use of tax dollars, and the geopolitical advancement of national interests as key performance measures in resource allocation. Otherwise, as "Senator Barry Goldwater observed, 'The budget process distorts the nature of Congressional oversight by focusing primarily on the question of how much before we answer the key questions of what for, why, and how well.'"[34]

Map Checks

No long term human endeavor can stand the test of time without periodic feedback and correction. As Kathleen Hicks points out, "An unused strategy is an irrelevant strategy."[35] Our current strategy process lacks an organized periodic review, although some may claim that the annual NSS acts as such. In reality, the NSS is currently used to broadcast administration policies and goals, with very little feedback or assessment involved. Tami Biddle recognized the need for periodic review of strategy and goals.

> All parties who are necessary to the success of a grand strategy must stay in ongoing and open communication with one another, not least of all to make sure that the logic relating ends and means is not usurped or undermined by the course of events, or simply forgotten. Progress (or lack of progress) towards the aim must be monitored constantly, and adjustments made in light of setbacks or stagnation.[36]

Key to this progress review is interagency dialogue and feedback. Unfortunately, that feedback is often restricted by interdepartmental rivalries and parochialism. Hicks again noted, "Feedback across the various governance and management processes is limited at every level."[37] Even within individual agencies, the institutional culture and the press of daily demands often precludes any serious review. Hicks continues,

"Compounding the complex and stovepiped nature of DOD enterprise governance is the paucity of feedback and assessment mechanisms."[38]

Serious review can only be accomplished with forceful leadership and dedicated systems. David Rothkopf recommended, "We must then recognize that one of the qualities to be valued most in our leaders is constant questioning and constant evaluation."[39] Kathleen Hicks recognized this when she recommended, "The Secretary of Defense should focus each quarter on the statement or confirmation of his highest priorities and on focusing his senior advisors on the execution and continual assessment of those priorities."[40] A similar statement could be made for the NSC and the president. A comprehensive interagency review must be built into the strategy process in order to ensure unity of effort, validation of priorities, and continuity of intent across the government enterprise in support of national objectives. As Tami Biddle noted, "Coordination of goals (among a large number of stakeholders) must be constant; communication must be ongoing and (to the greatest extent possible) free of rancor and infighting."[41] Only then can we be assured of long term support and sustained exertion towards national interests.

Getting Beyond the 50 Meter Target

Our current national strategy process has evolved into a crisis management procedure, managed by ad hoc working groups and financed through supplemental budgets. According to James Kitfield, rather than developing and working towards a long range strategy as identified by the president and led by the NSC, our government operates in ". . . an environment of constant 'crisis management,' where problems are raised one by one in deputy level meetings."[42] Flournoy and Brimley noted that, "The reality is that America's most fundamental deliberations are made in an environment

that remains dominated by the needs of the present and the cacophony of current crises."[43] In fact, many policy makers believe that the current environment and the chaotic rate of global change preclude any attempt to execute long term planning. They hark back to Secretary of Defense McNamara's famous declaration that "There is no longer any such thing as strategy, only crisis management."[44] Such a position is tempting. It relieves the instruments of government of the responsibility and effort of identifying what they want the future to look like, and then working hard to achieve it.

But such a position is short sighted and will ultimately be detrimental. Simply managing each crisis as it occurs precludes the ability to influence and possibly prevent events beforehand. Liddell Hart identified this over fifty years ago when he wrote, "Whereas strategy is only concerned with the problem of winning military victory, grand strategy must take the longer view—for its problem is the winning of the peace."[45]

The attempts to improve America's interagency process and its ability to plan and implement effective strategies has gained traction in the last ten years, headed by such notable thinkers as James Locher and Michele Flournoy. For the most part, these attempts have resulted in recommendations for structural and organizational change, taking as their cue the instrumental Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986. The result is a series of "Beyond Goldwater-Nichols" studies, now in the fourth edition, which provide recommendations for improving the interagency process.

Such recommendations may be needed, but organizational revisions and structural additions do little more than increase bureaucracy and often create new problems. James Schlesinger noted that,

> The incongruities that exist in the organizational structure are, however, considerably eased by the subformal and informal systems . . . These

> subformal systems must be continually borne in mind, whenever one considers the necessity of reform. For such systems mean, first, that reform may not be as much required, as one would infer from the formal system, and, second, one must take care in any reform that one does not do damage to these useful subformal systems.[46]

Congress has also begun to address the issues. Representative Ike Skelton, then Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee lamented, "For many years, we've heard that when it comes to interagency collaboration on national security, our system is inefficient, ineffective, and often down-right broken."[47] Consequently Congressman Skelton and Congressman Geoff Davis introduced legislation to develop interagency national security professionals through a program modeled after the Joint Officer Qualification system utilized by the Defense department.[48]

Many of the concepts engendered in these recommendations are already occurring within the interagency process. America's interagency process has transformed significantly (albeit incrementally) under the stress of two wars and the events since 9-11. The current process is fundamentally sound in theory. Paul Miller observed, "One conclusion is immediately apparent: the process works. Agencies are working together to implement policy."[49] David Rothkopf agrees that, "Indeed, for the most part they have served us well."[50] Where the process breaks down is under the stresses of complex problems with no real solutions where it suffers from lack of enforcement and personality frictions. At the heart of this conflict is the often stormy relationship between the Department of State and the Department of Defense. Given the institutional cultures and ever-changing personalities involved, it is doubtful that any reorganization will have a greater than moderate impact. The interagency process is what it is, a flawed and struggling yet still functioning system.

Yet within the system there remain opportunities to improve strategy development and interagency cooperation. After all, those involved are committed public servants dedicated to serving their nation. LTC John Bartolotto wrote in 2004 that, "Structural and procedural changes are not enough . . . Also needed is a focus that provides coherent visions of national interests, clarity of national security policy, and clear directions to the design of strategy."[51] What is needed is a method to develop comprehensive national strategy, and then detailed planning guidance to the subordinate agencies which ensures nested and complementary supporting strategies. A method must be devised to tie the budgeting process more intimately with national ends and ways. Finally, America must implement a formal evaluation system which incorporates strategic intelligence in a detailed assessment of our ends, ways, and means.

Recommendations

Recommending feasible improvements to the national strategy process can be a daunting task. Given the complexities of the interagency process, these recommendations will focus on improvements to those areas within the process which would facilitate clearer guidance, focused efforts, improved funding, and better interagency cooperation.

The first recommendation is for Congress to pass additional legislation similar to the Goldwater-Nichols Act requiring a Quadrennial National Strategy Review (QNSR) which identifies long term national ends (15-20 year horizon). This document will complement but be more comprehensive and holistic than the current big three (Defense, Homeland Security, and State) Quadrennial Department Reviews. The QNSR should be a complete "whole of government" strategy, identifying interests which

require foreign and/or domestic policies to achieve. Such a review will provide ". . . A comprehensive look at how we can spend our resources most efficiently, how we can achieve our priorities most effectively, what we should be doing differently, and how we should prepare ourselves for the world ahead."[52] This review would allow the president to identify long term national interests, provide broad guidance in pursuance thereof, and assign lead agency responsibilities. Under the QNSR umbrella, the big three Quadrennial Reviews could provide nested, complementary strategies to meet the desired domestic, foreign, and security policy objectives. Without such a document, each of the existing Quadrennial Reviews is essentially a monolithic document with no overarching strategy to coordinate and synchronize efforts. As Kathleen Hicks pointed out, "To be useful, the QDR should be nested within a broader Quadrennial National Security Review conducted under the President's guidance."[53] Since enduring national interests seldom experience sweeping changes, each document would truly be a review of the previously identified ends and any corrections that are needed. The quadrennial requirement would tie the document to each new administration, allowing for slight course corrections caused by the change in government.

Additionally, a Presidential Directive should implement improved strategic planning procedures which complement or even replace the existing NSS. This would require the National Security Council to prepare biannual National Security Planning Guidance (NSPG) for the interagency community. Whereas the NSS outlines broad statements of strategic direction and is designed for public consumption, the NSPG will be classified and include a detailed strategy which connects ends, ways, and means with an emphasis on execution. Whereas the QNSR is focused on enduring ends, the

NSPG will be a more dynamic document, identifying needed corrections, reallocating responsibilities, and adjusting to the global situation in light of evolving circumstances. In effect, the NSPG would be the interagency equivalent to the Guidance for Employment of Forces document. If the QNSR represents the long term national strategy (one to two decades), the NSPG would address the mid-term strategy and look three to five years into the future. Both documents, however, would break the current paradigm of focusing on the "crisis du jour."

Subordinate agencies will utilize the NSPG to develop their individual strategies and budget requests, based upon tasks assigned and resources required. The biannual nature of the guidance will allow for agencies to incorporate key tasks and responsibilities into their budget cycle, justifying the cost based upon the national interests and assigned missions. Utilizing a Presidential Directive would allow the president to maintain control of the process, tailor it to his NSC and personal leadership style, while still providing ownership and accountability at the department level. Too often bureaucratic reorganizations have faltered in the past because they failed to demand the accountability which drives the behavior of individuals and organizations.[54]

If a national strategy is to be effective, America must find some way to cooperatively involve the legislative and executive branches. The logical course of action is to tie the budget process to strategy development. Congress must enforce the annual submission of the NSS in conjunction with the president's budget. The executive branch should also make the NSPG and individual agency strategies available as part of the budget approval process. Tying the submission of these strategies to the budget process will provide Congress with the connection between

strategy, force structure, and planned activities. Such a procedure could highlight the discrepancies faced by some departments in their assigned tasks and available resources. For instance, even though the United States has recently been involved in significant nation building and development as a result of two wars, the United States Agency for International Development has suffered a 75% reduction in its staffing numbers since the 1970's.[55] By involving Congress in the strategy approval process more intimately, the administration will ensure the resourcing of the agreed upon objectives and a more cohesive application of the DIME.

Care must be taken to prevent the budget from driving strategy. Ends drive strategy, not means. The president must be the driving force. But an unresourced strategy is worthless. Both branches of government must work together to identify adequate means to address achievable objectives. Compromise is required, not simply recommended. Working together, the executive and legislative branches could ensure that America never again espouses a policy which we are incapable of funding. There have been many calls both in and out of government for major reform in the budgeting and congressional committee system. A full review of the situation is beyond the scope of this recommendation. But tying budget requests to the national strategy and focusing a whole of government approach on the three D's (diplomacy, development, and defense) would provide a decent start. The president needs an integrated, interdepartmental approach to complex strategic issues which includes congress in the determination of strategic priorities.

Another Presidential Directive should require a biannual assessment of the NSPG objectives by the NSC, supported by the intelligence community and compared

to a strategic intelligence assessment. This assessment process would provide a powerful apparatus integrating intelligence analysis, subject matter expertise, and experienced policy and operational leadership to approach national strategy objectives. It would allow the NSC to assess progress, adjust guidance, and propose integrated, comprehensive strategies to the president. It would also safeguard national resources by determining what works and what doesn't, allowing for the cancellation or remissioning of programs which do not contribute efficiently to the national objectives. The assessment should look at each of the NSPG objectives and answer the following questions:

1. Is the strategy still practicable?
2. Are the various agency supporting strategies properly nested? Do they contain redundancies?
3. Are the appropriate resources available?
4. What are the recommendations for adjustment?

Our current process and interagency organization lacks suitable feedback and assessment mechanisms. If done properly, the NSPG assessment would allow our government to see ourselves and our performance objectively. The president and the NSC could ascertain if our current strategy is effective and could enforce accountability of those tasked with its execution. Congress would be able to determine if funded programs met expectations, needed additional resources, or were simply sunk costs.

The assessment would also require the intelligence community to provide the sorely needed strategic intelligence needed for careful strategy development. This analysis should focus on the future trends, possible developments, and potential wild

cards that may impact our national interests. Informed policy makers and planners can then make educated decisions on current and future strategies. By creating a biannual requirement which is offset from the biannual NSPG, the government can conduct a meaningful, informed, recurring national strategy development process. In military terms, the assessment would provide the president and the NSC with a National Training Center take-home packet that would highlight the changes necessary for the next NSPG.

Conclusion

The American system of checks and balances splits the responsibility for a national strategy between the legislative and the executive branches. The executive branch defines the national ends and is responsible for implementing the ways. The legislative branch provides the means to accomplish these objectives through the budgeting and oversight process. Even within the executive branch, many of these responsibilities are split between the Department of Defense, the Department of State, and increasingly, the Department of Homeland Security. James Schlesinger wrote, "The system of checks and balances, fundamental as it may be to the American democracy, markedly detracts, not only from the unity of command (save in periods of dire national emergency), but even from the possibility of coherent and consistent policy formulation."[56] Divided governmental responsibilities may create inefficiencies, but it is the defining element of our constitutional government. The challenge lies in minimizing these inefficiencies and ensuring unity of effort.

Our current national strategy process does not tie these responsibilities together in a cohesive process that ensures unity of effort and full application of the elements of national power in support of our strategic interests. Even those within our government

acknowledge this deficiency. The First Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review stated that, "We can work smarter and better by setting clear priorities, managing for results, holding ourselves accountable, and unifying our efforts."[57] By implementing the recommended changes to the current process, America will be able to adequately plan, resource, and execute a grand national strategy.

Endnotes

[1] James Locher, *Forging a New Shield, Report of the Project On National Security Reform* (Washington DC: The White House, 26 November 2008), i.

[2] Kathleen H. Hicks, *Invigorating Defense Governance, Beyond Goldwater-Nichols Phase 4 Report* (Washington DC: Center for Strategic & International Studies, March 2008): vii.

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